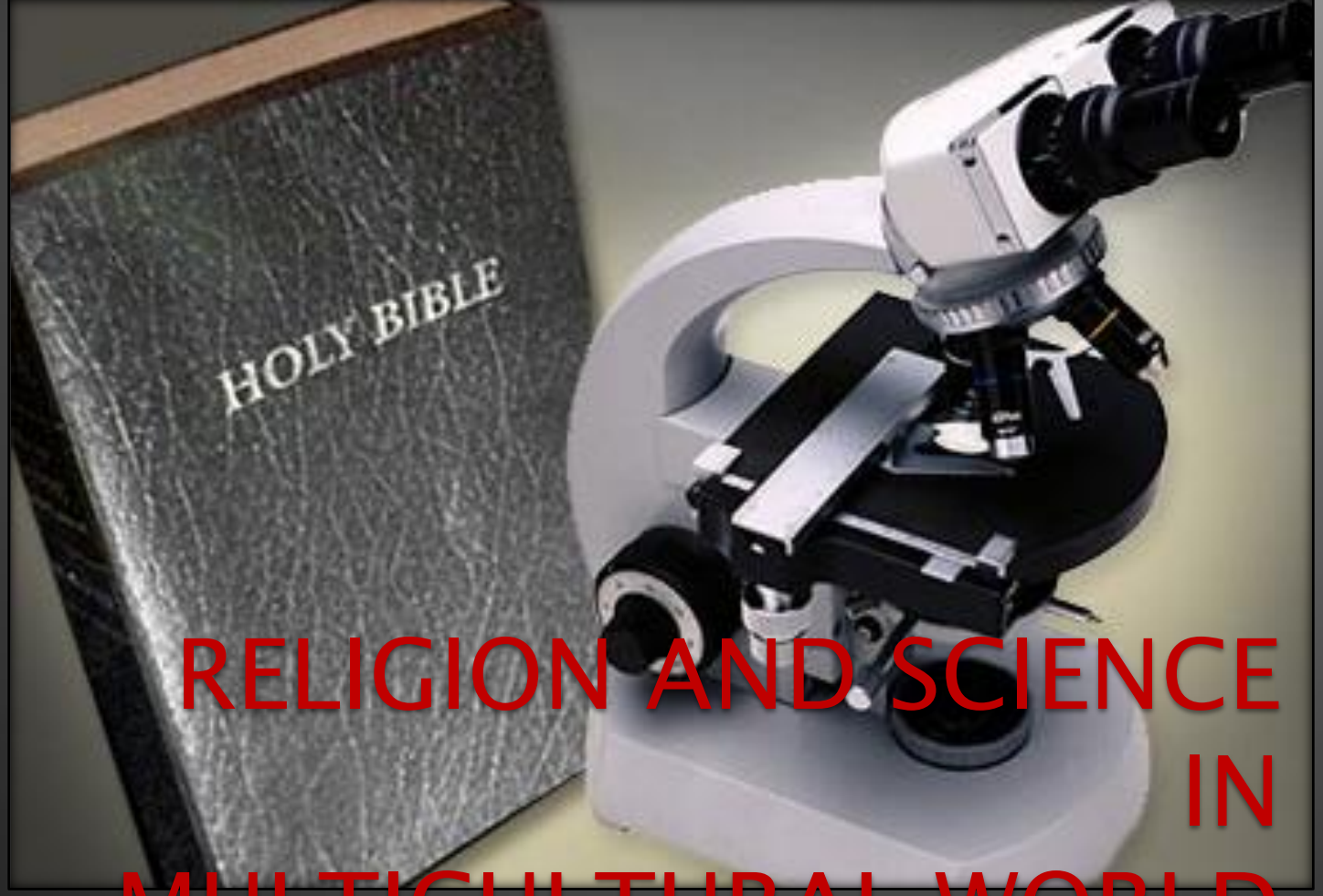


RELIGION AND SCIENCE IN MULTICULTURAL WORLD

SHAFA ELMIRZANA
BALIK PAPAN
2014

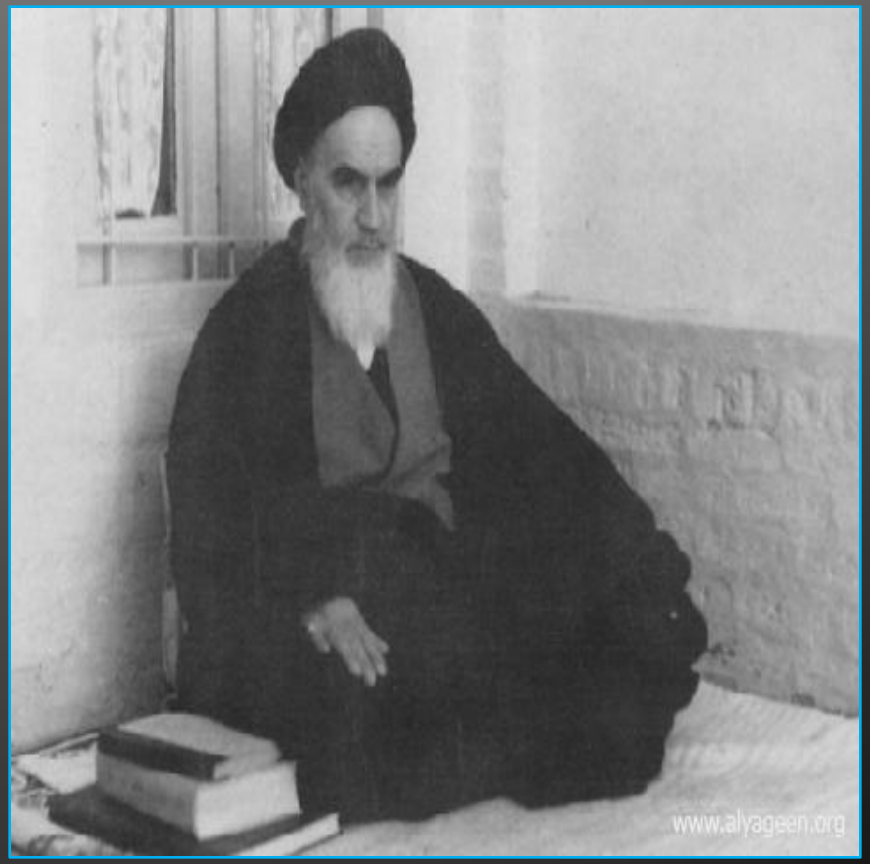
The Roles of Religions in Today's World

Modernization relegates religion?

- Once popular theories of global progress and secularization commonly held that modernization would relegate religion to an insignificant role in public affairs.
- Even today, when we try to assess the value of religion over and against other dimensions of civic life, we often do so with the assumption that religion *per se* shares nothing, as an idea or even as an experience, with the pluralism, liberalism, and secularism that are regarded as the defining criteria of modern democratic societies.

Iranian Revolution

- The surge of Islamic politic activism that crossed a first threshold of historical visibility in the Iranian revolution of 1979 demonstrated the erroneousness of these predictions and thus, among other things, opened the way for Bernard Lewis and Samuel Huntington to reintroduce religion as a relevant category for understanding post-Cold War geopolitics in their "clash of civilizations" thesis.



Sociologist's Theory

- Along with repentant secularization theorists such as Peter Berger, Bryan Wilson, observes as far back as 1969 that, although modern secular society "has little direct regard for religion" and "does not appear to depend in any direct way on the maintenance of religious thinking, practices, or institution," one can nonetheless witness "still persisting influence of past religion even further."

- Like Wilson and Berger, most contemporary sociologists are persuaded that religion is as much a force today as ever it was, though there can be no doubt that the religious landscape and the trajectories of religious influence have altered substantially.

The role of religion in today's world

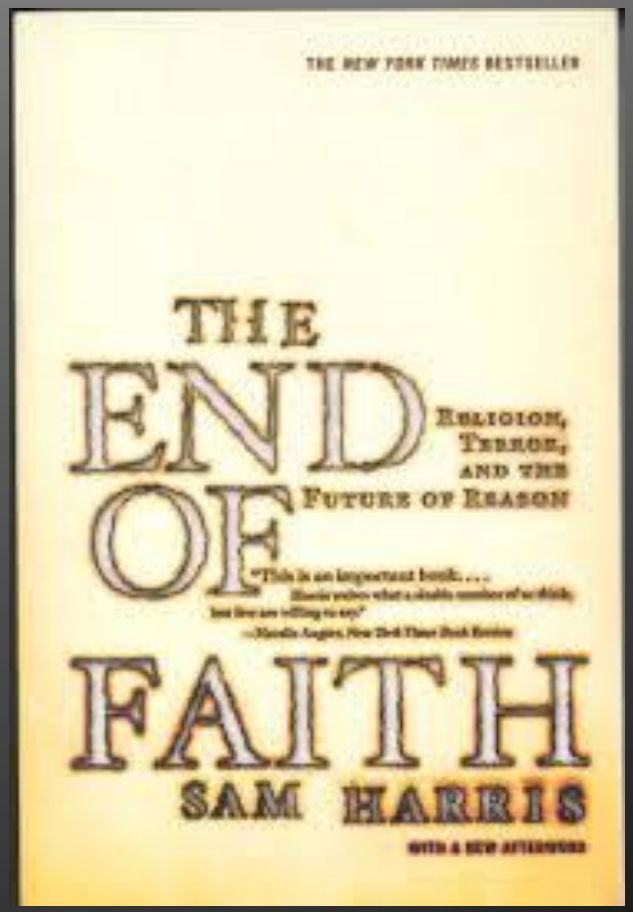
- To assume that we are living in a secularized world is to make a false assumption.
- The world today, is as fervently religious as it ever was, and in some places more so than ever. It is no exaggeration to say that, in today's day and age, religion is one of the most powerful and pervasive forces on earth

ATHEIST EVANGELIS

- Sceptical attitude to religion can be seen in some of the prominent “Atheist Evangelis”:
  - Christopher Hitchen, *God is not Great: How Religion Poisons Everything* (2007);
  - Richard Dawkins, T*he God Delusion* (2006);
  - Sam Harris, *The End of Faith: Religion, Terror, and The Future of Reason* (2004) dan *Letter to a Christian Nation (2006),* and

Science vs Religion

- The validity of religion is questioned, especially with the publication of Sam Harris' book entitled *The End of Faith*.
- "As long as it is acceptable for a person to believe that he knows how God wants everyone on earth to live, we will continue to murder one another on account of our myths" (134).



Some Harris in *The End of Faith*

- He identifies the destructive nature of faith
- He has written this book in order to convince the reader that all religious beliefs are absurd and are, furthermore, hazardous to us.
- Harris is reacting against modern Islamic terrorists and the religious elitism of the American government.

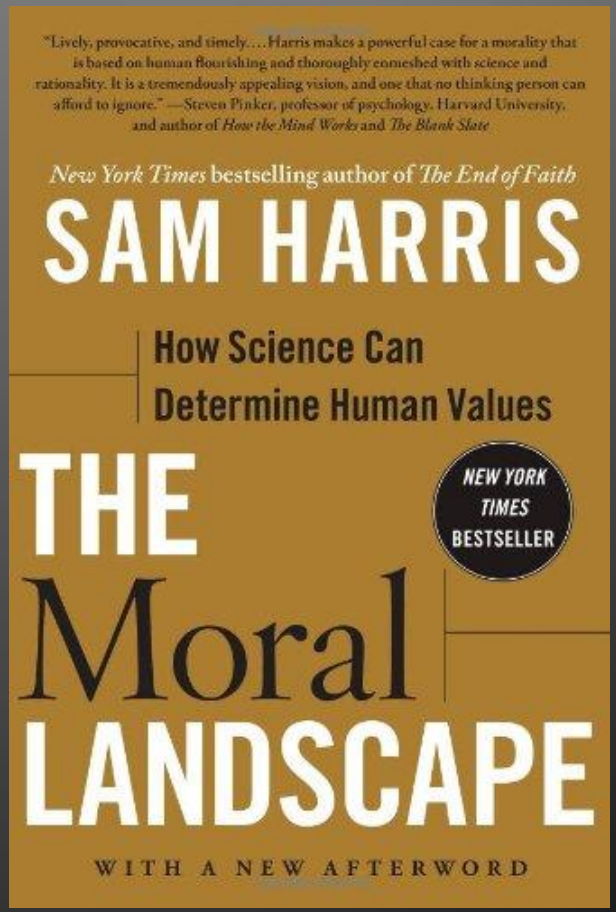
Religion Vs Science Which one morally more important?

- Albanian highly respected tradition called *Kanun*, on retaliation for someone killed by others. (Albanian living in a prison in his house). (Bilefsky, 2008, Mortimer & Toader, 2005, cited in Sam Harris, *The Moral Landscape, How Science Can Determine Human Values*, New York: Free Press, 2010, p. 1)

- Question: Are Albanian morally wrong for having such a community structure?
- Is the tradition of retaliation an "evil"?
- Can we say that their values are not better or even worse compare to our values?

Science and religion

- How can we say that scientifically a certain way of life is better that others? Or morally better than others?
- Whose definition we take to see that the one is morally better?


"Lively, provocative, and timely. . . . Harris makes a powerful case for a morality that is based on human flourishing and thoroughly enmeshed with science and rationality. It is a tremendously appealing vision, and one that no thinking person can afford to ignore." —Steven Pinker, professor of psychology, Harvard University, and author of How the Mind Works and The Blank Slate
New York Times bestselling author of The End of Faith
SAM HARRIS
How Science Can Determine Human Values
THE Moral LANDSCAPE
NEW YORK TIMES BESTSELLER
WITH A NEW AFTERWORD

Science and Morality

- Sam Harris with his book *The Moral Landscape* argues that, "The more we understand ourselves at the level of brain, the more we will see that there are right and wrong answers to questions of human values."

- It means that science can also talk about morality or good and bad.

Does religion matter?

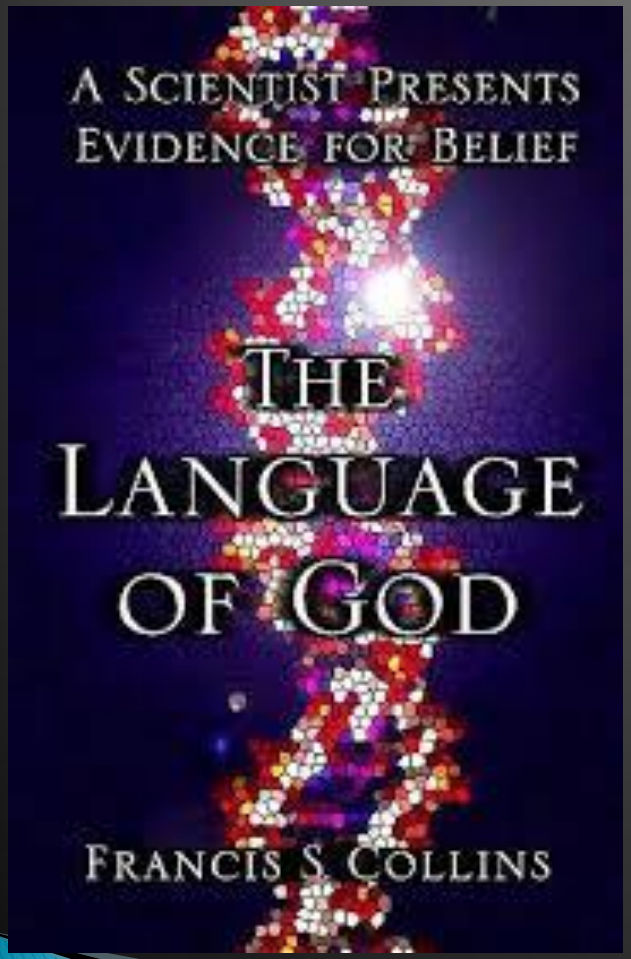
- An antropolog Scott Atran, says that “core religious beliefs are literally senseless and lacking in truth conditions.”
- For him, “Muslim suicide bombing has absoultely nothing to do with Islamic ideas about martyrdom and jihad; rather, it is the product of bonding among ‘fictive kin’. . . . has nothing to do with religion, it has to do with whether you belong to soccer club.” (Atran, 2006a)

Social scientist and religion

- Some of social scientists have no capability in accepting that someone one really believes in what they say they believe.

- Meanwhile we witnessed that believe in curative power from human skin in Afrika, and also become a common/general belief in the West. For example, “mummy paint,” cream or oil made from mummy, to cure Lincoln. In 1908s Merck sold “genuine Egyptian mummy” for epilepsi, abses, ect. (Ariely, 2008, p.177)

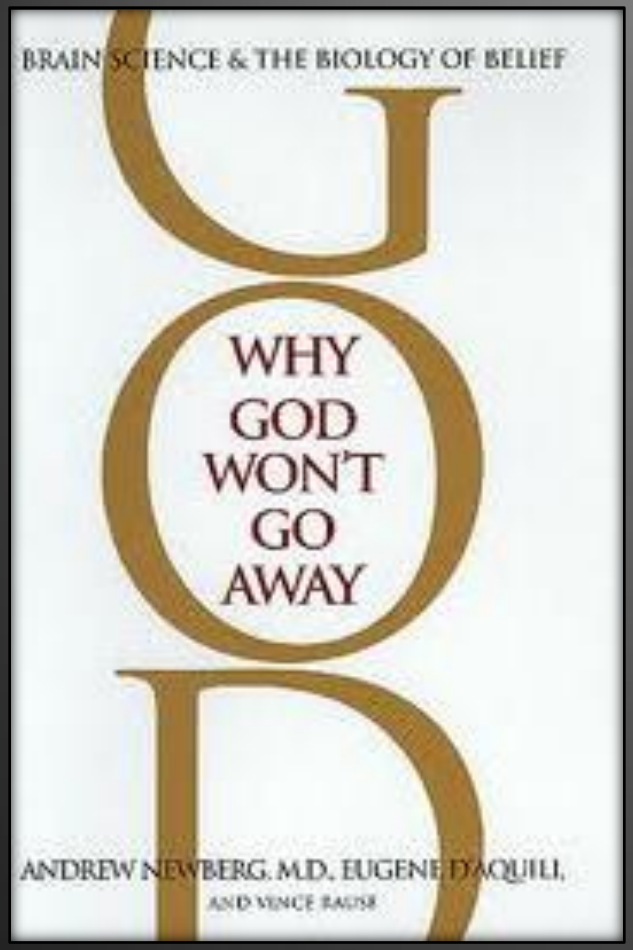
Religion vs Science

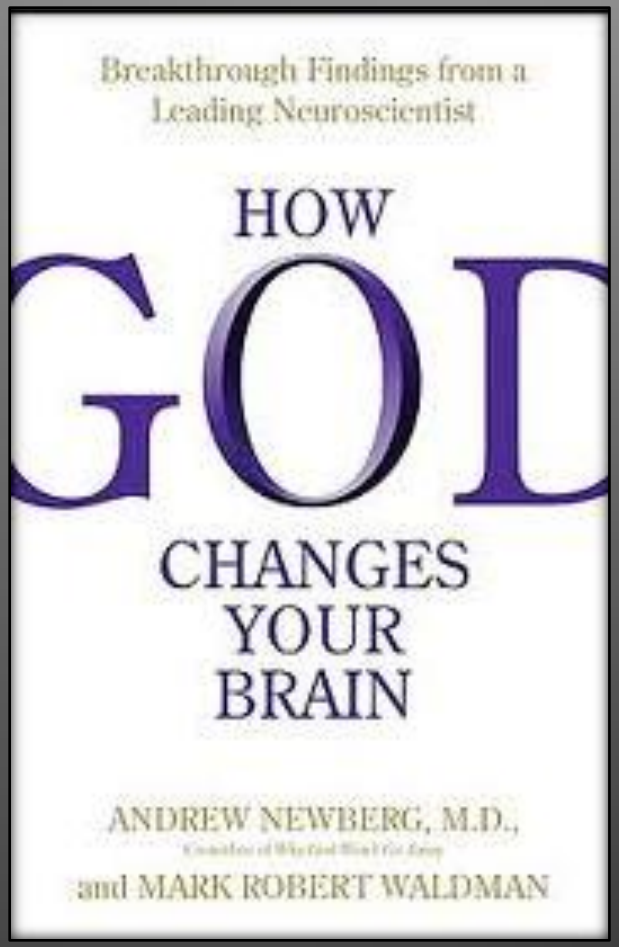


- Contrary to Harris, Francis S. Collins, for example in his book *The Language of God, A Scientist Presents Evidence for Belief*, opposed a tiring stereotype on the conflict between religion and science.
- Collins is the chair or president of the Human Genome Project, a wellknown world scientist.
- “faith in God and faith in science can coexist within a person and be harmonious.”

Harmony of science and religion

Collins have done research on DNA, but he also is a devoted believer to God and based on the scripture. The book above is writen because he believes that “faith in God and faith in science can coexist within a person and be harmonious.” (Francis Collins, 2006).




Breakthrough Findings from a Leading Neuroscientist
HOW GOD CHANGES YOUR BRAIN
ANDREW NEWBERG, M.D.,
and MARK ROBERT WALDMAN

A new research also have done by neuroscientist Andrew Newberg, M.D together with therapist Mark Robert Waldman conclude that *"the religious impulse is rooted in the biology of the brain*." God seems to be hard-wired into the human brain.

Newberg and Wadman

- Both give us a magnificent, comprehensive explanation of *how spiritual beliefs and experiences enhance changes in our brains and yied better health and well-being*.
- In this book they bring science and religion closer together.
- Based on new evidence culled from their brain-scan studies on memory patients and meditators, their web-based survey of people's religious and spiritual experiences, and their analyses of adult drawings of God, neuroscientist Andrew Newberg and therapist Mark Robert Waldman and their research team have concluded that *active and positive spiritual belief changes the human brain for the better*.

Religion vs science

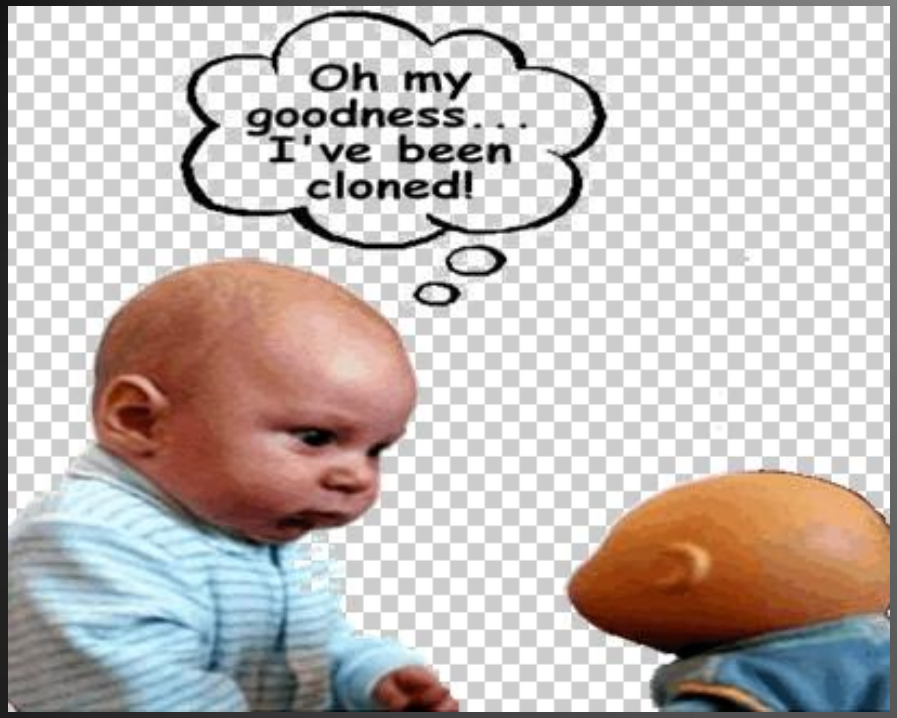
- The examples of books from scientists above are shown that science and religion are closely related.
- The genius, Albert Eistein, in *The Human Side,* wrote:
  - Our time is distinguished by wonderful achievements in the fields of scientific understanding and the technical application of these insights. Who would not be cheered by this? But let us not forget that knowkedge and skills alone *cannot lead humanity to a happy and dignified life*. Humanity has every reason to place the proclaimers of high moral standars and values above the discoverers the objective truth. *What humanity owes to personalitieslike Buddha, Moses, and Jesus ranks for me higher than all the achievements of the inquiring and constructive mind.*

Bio-technology Revolution

Ever since the announcement of success in the cloning of a sheep named Dolly, significant breakthroughs in the medical world has happened. When Dolly was successfully cloned, people started to ask, how long will it take until "the shepherd" can also be cloned?

An example of this can be seen in the writings of G de Wert "A Sheep Can Be Copied, the next step will be a cloned shepherd."

(G de Wert, *NRC Handelsblad,* 12 Maart 1997, p. 7)



Human cloning

In 2001 a private company, Advanced Cell Technologies (ACT), located in Worchester, Massachusetts announced that they have succesfully created the first human embryo through cloning.

(See, Jose B. Cibelli, Ann A. Kiessling, Kerrianne Cunniff, Charlotte Richard, Robert B. Lanza. And Michael D. West. "Somatic Cell Nuclear Transfer in Human: Pronuclear and Early Embryonic Development," *e-biomed: The Journal of Regenerative Medicine 2 ,* 2001: 25-31)

Pros and Cons

- Debates begin to rise and the supporters of this research call this “therapeutic cloning”, and they believe that if it succeeds, it can be a foundation for medicine (treatments) for many diseases, from Parkinson’s to diabetes.

Religion needs to remain in dynamic dialogue with the present, including the development of science and technology.

Without this interaction, religion crumbles and becomes an empty shell. An empty collection of rituals and formalities, without or with forgotten meaning. Whereas this meaning is precisely what constitutes the essence of faith.

Humanity is of far more importance than the ceremonial law. "The Sabbath is made for man, and not man for the Sabbath."

Religion and Public Policy

- Excluding religious perspectives from public debate and policy creation unfairly discriminate against religion. The criticisms leveled at religion apply with equal force to secular worldviews.

- Excluding religious justifications is both discriminatory and divisive. On the flip side, there is much gained by encouraging religious participation.

Combating religious ignorance

- It is only when all religious perspectives are welcomed to the public discussion and considered seriously in the formation of public policy that this ignorance will be overcome.

- Including a diversity of religious voices in the formulation and discussion of public policy may reveal the hidden religious bias within the norms of society at large.

Participation of people of faith

- James Childress, one the prominent bioethicist pointed out that religious communities were not only the primary source of values for many people in America, but also potentially the strongest source of resistance to controversial policies.

- Public policy that does not take into consideration the concerns of the faithful risks sowing the seeds of future strife and conflict. While allowing people of faith to participate in policy formation may not preclude resistance to contentious policies, their tendency to resist will be exacerbated if they or any other group are not allowed even a fair hearing and consideration of their views

Religious argument

- Religious argument cannot be answered unless people of faith are encouraged to offer it within the public domain for consideration.

- Involving the faithful in the formulation and development of public policy does not violate the spirit of church-state separation, as many fear. Rather, it represents a fulfillment of democratic and liberal promises.

Thank you

Let's discuss